

Lost Boys by EvieSmallwood

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: i love them, these two are the ultimate bros

Language: English

Characters: Mike Wheeler, Steve Harrington

Relationships: Steve Harrington & Mike Wheeler

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-12-29

Updated: 2017-12-29

Packaged: 2022-04-03 15:07:15

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,659

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Perfect never lasts long, but something close to okay always ends up taking its place.

or: Steve and Mike talk it out in Benny's.

Lost Boys

Author's Note:

- For [M11chaelwheeler](#).

I don't know what this is, I just know there's not enough of it.

Happy birthday, Leah!! <3

You're not worth shit.

The words still sting, now, even an hour after. They'll sting an hour later and a day later and a lifetime later, and they'll keep stinging even if he crosses dimensions, because even if monsters don't always follow you, their words still live in your heart.

It'd been a really low blow, and they'd both known it. As soon as the words had been uttered, the whole house had gone silent.

Then his father had looked away and his mother had stood, brushing off her mink coat and smiling in that strained way she'd been just about managing lately. "Why don't you leave, Stephen?"

At first, he hadn't been sure quite what she'd meant. *Forever*, or *for now*? Both concepts seemed terrifying. Forever, even if he's only seventeen. Or for now, even if he has nowhere to go and no one to talk to.

He had left, though. He'd grabbed his keys and not looked back, and he'd driven straight to nowhere.

The park.

Steve hadn't been here since he was nine, huddled behind the slide with Cindy Myers, staring into her impossibly green eyes and thinking that nothing was better, that the sun had never been warmer, that everything was *perfect*.

Perfect hadn't lasted long.

Now, it's cold. The chill in the air bites his skin even through his jacket. The world seems still, like it's holding its breath. Not even the leaves are rustling. It's like someone put life on pause.

Steve comes to a stop in the middle of the basketball court. He knows Tommy still comes here sometimes. He knows Lucas has been lately, too. He hopes they don't ever come into contact.

The concrete is freezing, but Steve settles down onto it anyway. He folds his legs and pulls out a pack of cigarettes.

It's not long before he's lying on his back, staring at the purple-tinted, star-riddled sky, wondering when he'd stopped wishing he could be older and started wishing he could go back in time.

When he'd been small, everything had been simple. All of his food magically appeared on the table, his clothes were always washed, and all the other kids loved him. Grades didn't matter so much, and it didn't matter if he had a job or if he was going to college. None of it mattered. He'd just been small.

The more space you take up, the more people expect you to do something with it.

Steve finishes up his first cigarette and goes to light a second. But then he stops, because it suddenly dawns on him that if he's gonna start chainsmoking, it better not be because his dad yelled at him.

He's gotten through monsters, hell, and a shitstorm of a breakup. He can handle tonight.

(If tonight weren't the cusp of the future, of course)

He lays there for a while longer, unlit cigarette between his fingers, flipping it over. Suddenly even with the stillness it feels like there's too much going on; the thoughts in his head are too loud, and he needs, *desperately*, to move.

He walks.

Steve doesn't know where he's going. All he knows is that he has to go someplace. He keeps his hands in his pockets and his shoulders

hunched to avoid being recognised or stopped (though the likelihood of that happening is ridiculously slim).

He stops in front of Benny's Burgers, a little out of breath, feet a little sore.

The place only just reopened, now run by his cousin Marsha Hammond. The lights are still on.

Steve swallows hard and marches up. He's not hungry, but he knows for certain it'll be warmer in there than it is out here.

It smells like grease and burgers; so powerful it's almost nauseating. He gets used to it after a minute or so, though.

Marsha nods to him from behind the counter, where he swiftly perches. Even though it's late, she seems busy—stacking boxes and cleaning surfaces. She holds up a finger.

He waits, swinging his legs like some little kid, feeling both embarrassed and youthful. He has to remind himself that no one can see, and that no one fucking cares anyway.

"Can I sit?"

Steve jolts so hard he nearly knocks his own seat over. He manages to stabilise himself enough to look over his shoulder.

It's not anyone he's expecting—some wild part of him automatically thinks *Dustin* or *Jonathan*, but it's not either of them.

It's Mike Wheeler, holding a crumpled ten dollar bill, looking like someone just shoved a lemon down his throat.

"Uh... sure. Yeah."

Mike hesitates anyway before he slips onto the stool beside Steve's. They don't look at one another for a long moment; they just watch Marsha scrub the inside of her freezer with an awesome fervency.

"Come here often?"

Mike starts a little. “First time.”

Steve nods. He taps the linoleum counter with his fingernail. “Where are the others?”

“They’re, um...” the kid shifts in his seat a little, looking down. “They’re pissed at me, I guess. Most of them, anyway.”

Steve raises an eyebrow. “A revolt against the leader?”

“I’m *not* the—”

“Bullshit,” Steve shakes his head. “I’ve seen the way they all look to you for answers, man. You *so* are.”

“Yeah, well,” Mike pauses, and then huffs when he fails to come up with a suitable retort. “I don’t even know what I did, exactly.”

Steve turns to inspect him; this gangly thirteen year old, who’s too tall and too skinny (at least in Steve’s opinion), and usually a little more of a smart ass. Tonight he just seems defeated. His shoulders are slumped and his eyes are downcast.

“You sure?”

“I-Dustin got mad at me because he says I hang out with El alone too much,” Mike blurts, and from there the rest of the story comes in a flurry. “And that’s completely stupid, right? I mean, I didn’t see her at all for a *year*. So I told him that, and he said ‘Well neither did we’, which—I mean, I get—but it’s.. it’s *different*. And then I asked Lucas why he wasn’t backing me up, and Lucas said Dustin had a point, so I brought up how often he’s off with Max alone, and the whole thing just sort of... *spiralled*.”

Steve isn’t sure when he became a therapist for a bunch of teenage kids, but he’s certain in that moment that he never wants their small-scale problems to get bigger than this. He never wants them to have to worry like he does.

“Well,” Steve scoots a little closer, “I can tell you one thing, and this has to stay between us, okay?”

Mike nods, all attentive eyes and white knuckles. “Yeah. Definitely.”

“Dustin’s just scared,” Steve says, lowering his voice a little. “He sees all of this stuff happening—you and Lucas pairing off with the girls, and, you know, *doing things* with them—”

Mike’s nose wrinkles, but he lets Steve continue.

“And he feels like he’s falling behind, you know? Which, frankly, I don’t blame him for.”

Mike opens his mouth to speak when a basket of fries is dropped in front of them. Marsha gives them a stern look. “That’s all I got tonight, boys.”

Steve shrugs and grabs a handful. Therapy is hungry work.

“Thanks,” Mike says. He passes the ten, even though it’s way too much for just this, and doesn’t accept the change Marsha offers.

She brings back ketchup, though.

“I get what you’re saying,” Mike begins, wiping some salt from the corner of his mouth, “but... what am I supposed to do, y’know? The whole situation with El is complicated, and I can’t control how Lucas and Max spend their downtime. Dustin—he thinks he wants all this stuff, but he spends half his time with *us* playing video games or reading or *whatever*. He just doesn’t seem ready.”

“Have you considered, Michael,” Steve shoves a fry in his mouth, “that he’s bored of you losers?”

Mike shoots him a look. “We don’t *get* bored with each other.”

Fuck, these kids really don’t know what they have. “How do you know whether or not he’s ready? Shit, I bet your friends wouldn’t think you were if it weren’t for Eleven, right?”

Mike twirls a fry in the little paper cup of sauce. “I guess,” he bites his lip, “I don’t know. I don’t know how to fix the situation.”

“Well, first off, you should apologise—”

“But I didn’t—”

“Even if you didn’t do anything wrong,” Steve speaks over him. “He’s still hurt.”

Mike slumps in defeat a little. “Yeah, I guess.”

“You should also spend time with him one on one. When was the last time you did that, anyway?”

“Not for a while,” Mike admits.

Steve gives him a ‘*well there you go*’ sort of look. They continue to pick through the fries, double dipping without much care, and watching as Marsha restocks her fridge.

“That night...” Mike swallows. “What you did for us—I never thanked you, and I’m sorry.”

“Hey, it’s—”

“It’s really not... okay, I mean. I was being a total douche. To *everyone*. I was all last year.”

His eyes are wide like he’s taking in the truth, right there, in the middle of the burger joint. Then he blinks, resorting to glaring down at the napkin holder.

Pressure. That’s what’s on this kid’s shoulders, probably constantly. Pressure to be good, to preform well, to lead others. Pressure to always give and never want.

Steve doesn’t really understand what’s even happening when he reaches over and envelopes Mike in a hug, he just knows it needs to happen. He knows he needs some relief.

“It’ll be okay,” he says, a little startled when he hears a small sniffle. Mike clutches his jacket, shoulders shaking lightly. “I promise. You’ll get through it.”

You’ll get through it. It’ll be okay. I promise.

But who's promising Steve?

Author's Note:

Suuuper angsty. There might be more. Idk. I haven't written in like a week and this just sort of happened... sorry if it sucks. Anyway, thanks for reading!